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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 000538

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STATE FOR NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NEA/IPA FOR
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IS](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#)
SUBJECT: MOD MOVING AGAINST WEST BANK OUTPOSTS

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones for reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) The Israeli press reported on March 5-6 that West Bank settler council leaders and MOD officials reached an agreement to move unauthorized outposts included on the list of 26 outposts recognized by the GOI as established after March 2001, to alternative West Bank sites. MOD Chief of Staff Mike Herzog told the Ambassador on March 5 that discussions between the MOD and the settlers were ongoing and viewed the initial evacuation of a handful of outposts as the beginning of a process that would eventually address all 26 outposts, including the largest outpost of Migron. Oded Herman, Senior Advisor to MOD Pol-Mil Director Amos Gilad, confirmed to EconCouns and econoff that the IDF had already evacuated one outpost earlier this week and was scheduled to evacuate three more in the coming weeks. End summary.

MOD Confirms Outpost Evacuation Plan

12. (U) Israeli press reported on March 5-6 that West Bank settler council leaders and MOD officials agreed to move unauthorized outposts included on the list of 26 outposts recognized by the GOI as established after March 2001, to alternative West Bank sites. According to Ha'aretz, outpost dismantlements will occur in phases and evacuated families would be relocated into either the large settlement blocs or in other settlements near Jerusalem. The evacuated settlers will receive no compensation for relocating.

13. (C) MOD Chief of Staff Mike Herzog told the Ambassador on March 5 that discussions between the MOD and the settlers were ongoing, but an overall agreement has not been reached. (Note: By saying that an overall agreement has not been reached, Herzog likely means that despite the MOD and settlers agreeing in principle to evacuate unauthorized outposts, each phase of outpost evacuation will have to be negotiated separately with the settlers. End note.) Herzog viewed the initial dismantlement of a handful of outposts as the beginning of a process that would eventually tackle all 26 outposts, including the largest outpost of Migron. He said that the MOD was using its commitment to the Israel High Court of Justice to propose a plan to evacuate Migron by August, as a lever to move settlers forward on the outpost issue. The settlers are "not very happy with us on this," he commented. Herzog requested that the USG view the MOD's discussions with the settlers and the initial evacuation of a few outposts as the beginning of a lengthy process and noted that the MOD was determined to see this process through.

14. (C) On March 6, Oded Herman, Senior Advisor to MOD Pol-Mil Director Amos Gilad, confirmed to EconCouns and econoff that the IDF had evacuated the Ofra South East outpost -- consisting of two uninhabited caravans -- earlier

this week. According to Herman, the MOD plans to move against three additional outposts in the coming weeks:

-- Yattir South West: Herman hoped that the IDF would be able to evacuate the Yattir South West outpost, located along the southern edge of the West Bank, within one week. Yattir South West consists of two long livestock buildings used to raise chickens, a container used as an office, and four caravans housing families. The IDF will dismantle the four caravans and relocate the families, but leave the two livestock buildings and the container that is being used as an office. According to Herman, laws applicable in the West Bank permit the livestock buildings and office to remain at the site. Herman did not provide further information on where these families will be relocated.

-- Qiryat Arba: A synagogue built on privately-owned Palestinian land outside of the Qiryat Arba settlement will be removed. Qiryat Arba is located adjacent to Hebron in the southern West Bank.

-- Mevo Horon agricultural farm: Caravans at the Mevo Horon agricultural farm outpost will be evacuated. The six families who live at this outpost will return to the Mevo Horon settlement. In response to questions regarding relocation, Herman said that if the settlers wished, they would be allowed to transfer their caravans into Mevo Horon as long as it was inside the settlement's master plan. (Note: In maps shown to Emboffs, the area of Mevo Horon's master plan exceeds the settlement's current built-up area. End note.) The Mevo Horon agricultural farm outpost is located northwest of Jerusalem near No Man's Land.

15. (C) Herman confirmed that the MOD has a plan with the

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settler council to evacuate some 26 illegal outposts in phased stages. Each phase of evacuations would need to be negotiated with the settlers. Due to the sensitivity of the plan, the MOD will not publicize the details because it does not want the settlers to feel like they are cornered, leading them to back out of negotiations or agreements made with the MOD. Settlement council leaders are already facing an uphill battle within their ranks, Herman noted. Overall, the settler rabbis are not supportive of the leaders' decisions to evacuate outposts. A segment of settlers -- activists, "hilltop youth," some yeshivas -- have also threatened to use violence against any evacuation of outposts. Notwithstanding the real possibility of violent opposition, Herman stressed that the MOD is committed to implementing the evacuation of these 26 illegal outposts, albeit quietly and with sensitivity towards the settlers. He noted that easy outposts will be evacuated first as a confidence building measure between the MOD and the settlers. The deal between the MOD and settler leaders is premised on an agreement that evacuated settlers can relocate only to legally recognized settlements, not other outposts; settlers will not be permitted to establish new outposts to replace those evacuated; and the MOD will not legalize any outposts. Herman acknowledged, however, that as part of the deal with the settlers, the MOD would likely allow construction within legally recognized settlements, as long as it is in an appropriately zoned area inside the settlement's master plan.

Civil Administration Also Tackles Illegal Structure

16. (C) On March 5, press reports also reported that the Civil Administration removed a container consisting of agricultural equipment at the Esh Kodesh outpost, but did not complete the dismantling of a water tower at the site. Press reports say that the Defense Ministry instructed that the dismantling of the water tower be stopped because it was not properly coordinated between the Civil Administration, the Defense Ministry, and the Directors of the Binyamin Regional

Council. Settlers, however, claimed that activists, mobilized at the site via the settler mobile text network, prevented the GOI from further destroying existing structures. Esh Kodesh is located in the central West Bank, southeast of the Ariel settlement. This outpost was established before March 2001 and has approximately 17 structures. (Note: The Esh Kodesh outpost is also known as Mitzpe Gilad or Migdalim South. End note.)

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JONES